

This Week in Washington

Congressman Richard Pombo
11th District, California

Pombo Applauds President Bush's Progress and Solid Policy for 2004

Washington, D.C. – January 20, 2004, Representative Richard Pombo attended President Bush's State of the Union address. The President discussed numerous accomplishments during the past year including a stronger economy, a more fiscally secure generation of seniors and a safer world, but he didn't forget the serious challenges still facing our nation.

"President Bush outlined his plans for continuing to make our nation safe on U.S. soil and abroad. I believe our nation needs leadership and a clear vision. I look forward to working with the President and Congress during this next session to accomplish many of the goals he addressed tonight."

War on Terror and Securing the Homeland

"Since September 11, 2001, Americans have rallied together to fight terrorism," said Rep. Pombo. "Although we have made progress, there are still many serious challenges and we must continue to face them head-on."

"I will continue to work with our county governments, health, police and fire departments, water resources and hospitals to ensure our safety in the event of an attack in California. But more can and will be done."

Want Results? Ask the U.S. Military

"For years, Saddam Hussein terrorized Iraqi citizens and committed atrocities. He was captured less than nine months after the start of the war in Iraq," said Rep. Pombo. "U.S. forces get results. He'll never return to power."

Economy and Jobs on the Rise

President Bush said:

"You have doubled the child tax credit from 500 to a thousand dollars, reduced the marriage penalty, begun to phase out the death tax, reduced taxes on capital gains and stock dividends, cut taxes on small businesses, and you have lowered taxes for every American who pays income taxes."

"Jobs for Americans are one of my top priorities, and the best 'job creation' program I've seen is our growing economy," said Rep. Pombo.

"We have encountered struggles and hardships over the past year. But economists tell us the outlook is bright with jobs being created on a weekly basis and home sales soaring (*continued on page 2*)."

A Summary of the Most Recent Major Economic Indicators

- **GDP.** The U.S. economy expanded at an annual rate of 8.2 percent in the third quarter of 2003—the best since 1984, exceeding analysts' 6 percent forecast (*Source: Commerce Department*).
- **Unemployment rate.** At 5.7% in December, it was lower than the average unemployment rates of the 1980s, the 1990s and the 30-year historical average (*Source: Commerce Department*).
- **Jobless claims.** For the week ending December 27, 2003, the U.S. saw a drop in jobless claims by 339,000—the lowest level in jobless claims since January 2001 (*Source: Commerce Department*).
Weekly jobless claims have been less than 400,000 for over three months (*Source: Commerce Department*); weekly jobless claims under 400,000 is generally a sign of a stabilizing labor market.
- **Homeownership.** The homeownership rate was 68.4 percent in the third quarter—its highest level ever (*Source: White House*).
- **Housing Starts.** In November, housing starts were at their highest levels in almost 20 years (*Source: White House*).
- **Consumer Spending.** Consumer spending increased by 6.6 percent in the third quarter of 2003 (*Source: Joint Economic Committee*).
- **Non-durables.** Spending on non-durables—food and clothes—increased by 7.9 percent in the third quarter of 2003—the best since 1976 (*Source: Washington Post, 10/30/03*).
- **More consumer spending.** Spending on "big-ticket" items—like cars—increased by an astounding 26.9 percent in the third quarter of 2003 (*Source: Washington Post, 10/30/03*).
- **Stocks.** Shareholder wealth is up more than \$3 trillion since October 2002. Fifty percent of this increase in stock market wealth has occurred since tax relief was enacted in May (*Source: ASA*).

This Week in Washington cont.

(Pombo Applauds President Bush's Progress and Solid Policy for 2004 cont.)

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"I know that Americans prefer earning a paycheck to collecting unemployment or welfare checks. That's why I'm working to stimulate the economy, getting Americans back to work by addressing both the short and long-term needs."

Leaving No Child Behind

"We can ensure that our kids go to the best and safest schools in the world by sending dollars directly to the classroom, getting back-to-basics, and increasing parental involvement," said Rep. Pombo.

"Our tax dollars should be spent on teachers, textbooks and technology. The folks back home don't need Washington bureaucrats telling them what works. Let's give teachers the ability to come up with solutions in exchange for accountability. That's how we are going to get the results we want."

Health Care Crisis

"The Medicare Prescription Drug bill we passed last session provides health savings accounts and drug benefits – while maintaining research and development incentives for the pharmaceutical industry," said Rep. Pombo.

"I will continue to support measures that put patients first. When you visit your doctor you deserve the best possible care, not just what insurance companies and accountants decide you deserve. It's simply a quality-of-life issue."

Privatization Isn't a Dirty Word

"One scare-tactic widely used in the Social Security debate is 'privatization.' It's just plain misleading," said Rep. Pombo.

"Instead of embracing scare tactics, I believe we need an opportunity to debate and consider options that go beyond old solutions to protect the security of America's current and future retirees."

Energy and the Environment

"As chairman of the House Resources committee, I am very pleased with our accomplishments of last session," said Rep. Pombo. "We passed the Healthy Forests Initiative with bipartisan majorities and it was signed into law."

"I hope Congress can take that same initiative with energy. We can't wait until our homes are dark before we seek a comprehensive policy."

Bush's Immigration Proposal

"While America is a nation of immigrants, we have a vested interest in an immigration system that is legal and fair," said Rep. Pombo. "We must be careful to remember rules have been established to allow immigrants to come to this country legally and fairly. Any changes to our immigration system must sustain the core principles of fairness."

"Whether Congress passes this proposal or not, it's going to be a debate that raises emotions and strong opinions. When we look at this proposal we need to keep in mind jobs for Americans is a first priority, as well as maintaining fairness for all those concerned."

"There's no doubt that Bush's proposal is controversial, and I think the debate will only escalate, being it is a presidential campaign year. I need a chance to study the President's proposal and listen to constituents before I determine its merits."

Transportation

"I am continuing my commitment to creating a transportation system that is efficient, environmentally friendly, reliable, and safe," said Rep. Pombo. "Locally and nationally I am working to resolve our challenging transportation problems by prioritizing needs and working to get results."

Pombo's Message to California's 11th District

"I am very proud to represent the people of California's Eleventh Congressional District in this second session of the 108th Congress. I will continue my efforts for a less-intrusive federal government and for the protection of our most basic freedoms and rights. If we remain committed to our principles, our commitment will see us through the challenges ahead."